



SIBERIAN CHRISTMAS.

—BY—
MARIE VALHASKY.



Y GRAND PARENTS on my mother's side were banished to Siberia in 1854. They were among the first exiles under the administrative process, that is, exiled without trial. They were refined, educated and wealthy.

My grandmother, a beautiful young woman of 26 years, was, during part of her journey, chained to a male convict of the lowest class. The treatment she then received drove my grandfather to frenzy, and he was killed by an officer a week after they left St. Petersburg. Whether there was ever any notice taken of his death I cannot tell. Three weeks after my grandmother gave birth to a daughter—my mother. Impossible as it may seem, they both lived, and to prove that there is a spark of manhood in the most hardened my grandmother received rather better treatment afterward, though how she could have lived God only knows. At length she reached Tomsk, and there her journey ended. Her sentence of banishment had been for twenty years, and she knew that meant for life.

Hopelessly she dragged herself from house to house, seeking a shelter for herself and little one. At length a wretched peasant gave her the use of one miserable room. She entered, believing she should at least find solitude; even this was denied political exiles. At any moment an officer may invade their privacy and their poor belongings pass under his inspection.

Hourly this most wretched woman prayed for death for herself and child, but they lived on and on, and strangely enough the little one thrived.

They lived upon the small allowance furnished by the government treasury for the support of those unable to work. This was barely enough to prevent starvation; not enough to give them one comfort, not even paper and ink. Correspondence was, however, a doubtful pleasure, as every letter received or sent had to pass under the inspection of an officer. Many a night after they had retired their room was entered and everything examined—even the bed.

Through all this they lived and the little Marie grew into a fair, large-eyed, timid girl, with a beauty so rare and delicate that her mother's heart awoke to still another ache.

With nothing to help her but the wisdom of unutterable love, my grandmother educated her child and made her a worthy branch of the noble house from which she sprang.

For fourteen years they had lived in that dreary cottage. The mother was now unable to leave her miserable bed. Christmas was approaching and Marie had never had a Christmas present in her life.

Young and old, as you gather about your Christmas trees on this blessed morn, think of this little girl! She is only the type of a class. There are many more as forlorn, though, thank



PRAYED FOR DEATH.

God, she now stands "where winter and where storms are calm, and the eternal hills are beautiful."

I think of her always. I will have no present. I will have nothing but an opportunity to work for those I love, who are still in exile. I write only to arouse attention. To help by ever so little is better than to sit still. When I read of those who give their lives in

this cause how I exult—how I long for their glorious martyrdom.

But patience—my day will come. My grandmother knew that the coming Christmas was to be her last on earth, and she poured out her whole soul in supplication to God to send a protector to her child. One came, but if there is a God why did he not harken sooner? One precious possession besides her treasured child my grandmother had kept all these years, so securely hidden that it had escaped the prying eyes of the vigilant officers. This was a picture of the little boy who died before the evil days fell upon her. A little joyous faced framed in curls, a manly, steady little fellow—so like the husband who had died for her—all that was left of a happy home. This picture she had never mentioned to Marie, afraid at times to even think of it, so ubiquitous were her persecutors. But now she must soon die and she would give herself the sad pleasure of bestowing this treasure upon her child for a Christmas present.

Christmas eve the two lonely ones sat crouched in each other's arms, and the mother again recounted the cherished memories of her brave little boy, again told the beautiful Christmas story and the customs of happy homes in other lands.

Then, it being very late, and the



WONDER & RAPTURE

danger of a visit seeming to be past, the mother drew from his hiding place the picture.

Marie gazed upon it with wonder and rapture. She had never seen anything so beautiful, and it was her own darling little brother.

What can I say to make you feel this as I feel it? Pause, happy mothers and sisters, and imagine yourselves living through it.

The door opened, an officer entered, snatched the picture, and after a scene I cannot describe, carried it away. He never returned it.

Suspicion was aroused that this poor, hollow-cheeked woman, on the verge of the grave, had secret communication with St. Petersburg.

A short time after my father took an adjoining room in this wretched cottage. My grandmother had known and loved his parents and she poured out the most devout thanksgiving to God for this friend who would surely watch over the child. His presence brought the first feeling of security she had known since her arrest so many years ago. My mother and father loved each other from the first and my grandmother died peacefully in my father's arms. After the burial they were married.

Some Christmas Carols.

If you hear a man protesting loudly during the week against the promiscuous slaughter of seals you may depend upon it that he very grudgingly bought his wife a sealskin sacque for Christmas.

Now is about the time when the fond wife will begin to hook change out of her husband's pockets with which to buy him a present, so as to make him believe she loves him.

People who think that Christmas is a season of peace on earth and good will toward men probably never saw a man skirmishing around at five o'clock on Christmas eve with a perturbed mind and a five-dollar bill buying presents for a wife and nine dearly-loved children.

The loving wife gave up \$5 for a shaving set as a Christmas gift for her husband. He has shaved with it just once, and now his face looks as if he had been pitted against Sullivan with hand gloves. He will present his wife on New Year's day with the razor, with which to pare her corns. Women have long heads.

THE END OF 1891.

We Can Now Look Back at Our Successes and Failures.

To the young the years speed not fast enough; to the old they are too short. The young employ the closing of one year in ambitious planning for the next, the aged muse over the events of the past and contemplate the mysteries of the future. In the lives of some the year has proved a memorable one, while in those of others it is suggestive of no special events. The hopes of one have reached fruition, the aspiration of another have fallen short of success, and thus the last day of December brings alike pleasant and sad memories. Whatever the year of 1891 has brought to us, there is a valuable lesson to be learned. If any undertaking upon which we entered has proved unsuccessful, we can now, on looking back over the ground, see more clearly the cause of our failure. No lesson is so forcibly learned as that born of experience. A past failure oftentimes points to a future success, if we but profit by the lesson. No year is wasted which brings to us a clear realization of our individual worth and its best employment. The experiences of the old year will make our successes during the new more assured, for we will have learned what should be avoided in the sea of life. If our bark has just ground over rocky reefs with but slight injury, let us not feel thankful that we were not entirely wrecked. To be successful, the truth has been taught that the best success is that which is born with modesty and a humble exterior. It is a poor success that brings with it an outward self-consciousness of our talents or gifts. The most admired and beloved men and women are those who combine prosperity with modesty. And thus to all the year can be fruitful of good results, if we but extract from our individual experiences only that which will be the most profitable for us to remember. Then we shall be better prepared to enter upon the New Year with wisdom, zeal and energy.

The Holiday Season in Dark Town.

Deacon Burnside (of Brewster station)—Go slow, chile; don't you drap nuffin' on dis 'casion, 'case we 'spec' city-folks dis 'Krispus, an' coons from town neva know when t' quit stuff' der skins when you puts biled brin in front ur 'em.

Young Rube (disciple of the deacon)—Dis am de las' chick on de roos, 'uncle, an' ef y' fren's frum de city don't swell up 'nuf on dis load ob white meat den you'd better chuck in er lot o' snow-balls fur dessert!

Deacon Burnside—You pore chile; you doan' know de joys ob 'ligion. 'Wat yer heerd las' Sabbath 'bout it bein' mo' blessed t' gib den t' take doan' 'pear t' hab tak'n er grip on yer in-telek'.

Young Rube—I doan' kno' nuffin' 'bout interlek, but I neva kno'd a city moke yit dat didn't tink dere wer heap mo' 'em.

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THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

Points on How and When to Decorate It.

A few days before Christmas, last year, I said to my husband, "If we had three or four children I would have a Christmas tree, but it doesn't seem as if it would pay for only one child." "Why," said he, "you might ask in the neighbors." And we did. The tree was a medium-sized pine, fitted into an empty soap box for a base, which, for extra security, had some pretty stones piled upon it. Its sides were covered with cloth of suitable color and size. The decorations consisted of pop-corn strung on threads a yard long and hung from the branches, bright-colored apples, and small apples covered with tin foil suspended by cords. The smaller gifts were hung from the branches; the larger ones were placed around the base of the tree. Some relatives having children in the family were asked to come and bring their gifts for each other and the little ones; we also invited a neighbor whose family consists of several children.

The tree bore its fruit on Christmas eve, which seems to be the most appropriate time for the distribution of gifts. The children kept from the room until all was finished, although one or two of the older ones were permitted, as a special privilege, to fasten their own gifts to the tree. When it was filled with toys, books, candies (in bright-colored mosquito net bags), and the varied assortment of handkerchiefs, gloves, mittens, knives, dolls, and other Christmas gifts, the tree presented a very pretty appearance. After the gifts had been distributed by some of the older ones and duly handed around for inspection, a lunch of sandwiches, cake and coffee was served, after which the tired but happy little ones dispersed. We older ones enjoyed it every bit as much as the children.

An Appropriate Gift.

Among the various things that ladies can make for holiday gifts is a mirror bolster. Take a piece of pink silk fifteen inches long and four and one-half inches wide; make a fringe half an inch wide on the ends, then carefully mark the lettering wished in fine lines with a lead pencil along the center of one-half of the silk and outline the letters in black sewing silk. Sew the silk up into a bag and fill tight with cotton sprinkled with sachet powder. Tie the opened end together with narrow pink ribbon of the same shade as the bolster and allow a length of about half a yard of the ribbon to hang down from the bow; on the end of this attach another bow. The last ribbon bow is intended to be tied on one side of the mirror support where the suspended bolster will always be ready for letting



A MIRROR BOLSTER.

the mirror back. Select the best sachet powder, heliotrope, for instance, using about one ounce for this affair. Orris root mixed with powder retains the odor longer than if the powder is used alone.

Yule Tide Memories.

"This is the month, and this the happy morn, Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King, Of wedded maid, and virgin mother born, Our great redemption from above did bring. For so the holy sages once did sing, That he, our earthly Father should release, And with his Father work us a perpetual Peace."

There is a charm about the Christmas period which is felt at no other time. It asserts itself as the December days begin to run and grows warmer and more intense until dawn of the glad morn which marks the anniversary of him who brought to earth a grander thought and nobler ambition than man had possessed. Just what this charm is, language may not describe, but we know that it spreads everywhere that the name of Christ and his glorious mission have been told; we also know that it inspires to joyous association, to good humor, to friendliness, to love, and to the recognition of the joys of others.

And this year more than others, does the Christmas charm fill the hearts of the people. For 1891 has been one of gladness, of prosperity, of present blessings, and future promise. It has been a time of plenty, and the poor and the lonely have been ministered to, if not by him who dwelt among them while he sojourned on earth, at least with that generosity and thoughtfulness which prove the spirit of the Savior is yet with men.

Love seems to fill the air at this joyous season, the harsh voice of passion is dumb for at least twenty-four hours, and strife has been silenced. There are heard songs of praise and thanksgiving mounting heavenwards, and whatever may have been true last month, to-day the conviction has come home to many a troubled and anxious heart, that, after all, happiness consists in what the blessed Jesus taught—"Peace on earth, good will to men."

It will be an ideal Christmas which will come to many a hearth for it will find peace and plenty; families gathered round the glowing hearth, peering happy in the love and respect of dutiful offspring, and children merry with life, and in seeming thoughtlessness still considerate of those proud fathers and mothers who have ever taught them that of all the anniversaries which the Christian world observes, the sweetest, the most peace-giving, the one which has sunk deepest into the heart of man and done most for the race, the altogether best, is Christmas day, for it symbolizes all that is pure and noble and good in mortal, and as well symbolizes the starting point on the road to immortality.

Then pealed the bells more deep and loud; 'God is not dead; nor doth he sleep! The wrong shall fall, The right prevail, With peace on earth, good will to men."

CHRISTMAS PROPHECIES.

Some Great Surprises Promised for the Year 1892.

Christmas has always been a prophetic time. If it falls on Friday the following year is looked forward to as one of great surprises. An ancient manuscript in the British museum has the following to say of Thursday which has a bearing on the events of 1891. It must be conceded that in some respects it hits the right nail on the head:

"If Christmas day on Thursday be, A windy winter ye shall see; Windy weather in each week And hard tempests, strong and thick. The summer shall be good and dry; Corn and beasts shall multiply; That year is good for land to till. Kings and princes shall die by skill. If a child born that day shall be, It shall happen right well for he; Of deeds, he shall be good and stable, Wise of speech and reasonable. Whose that day sees thieving about, He shall be punished, without doubt; And if sickness that day betide, It shall quickly from you glide."

Last winter was a windy one. The crops have been wonderful. Kings and Princes too have died by skill. The minor prophecies can only be summed up by those directly interested.

Of Questionable Value.



Mrs. Rubenstein—You know dot diamond ring you gef me last new year's, Sol?

Mr. Rubenstein—Yase.

Mrs. Rubenstein—Vich you rudder hef—dot fer a gollar-shud, or a new negk tie?

Mr. Rubenstein—Vell, I dinks I take der—er—negk tie.

The Last Delivery.

The last delivery of this holiday-time means a great deal to a great many people, and in very different ways. There are provident people who begin before the autumn is fully spent to provide themselves with all they need for the holidays, whether in the way of treats to themselves personally, or with those things which are to be produced for others on Christmas morning as though Santa Claus had just brought them down a convenient chimney. But such provident persons are by no means the rule, and the shop-keepers are doubtless sorry that they should be so few, for it would be much more comfortable for all concerned if the business of the last week before Christmas could be distributed over the four or five weeks before. As it is, almost too much is crowded into the last few days, and how the patient salesmen and women stand the strain to which they are subject at this time and still preserve their courtesy and good nature is almost incomprehensible. It must be that the spirit of the season upholds them, and it is pleasant to think that this is so, for it must be known to any one who has walked through the great bazaars at Christmas-time that no amount of training could so discipline frail human nature as to make it, without other aid, proof against the assaults which the men and women behind the counters have to meet with a smiling front hour after hour and day after day as the time for Christmas shopping draws to an end. To these hard-worked people the last delivery means very much. It means lighter work and shorter hours. To others, alas! it means no work at all, for many persons are employed just for the rush which culminates with Christmas, and the last delivery takes from them their temporary occupation.

Just The Thing.

Maiden, I am sorely tried What to do this Christmas-tide. Costly gifts I would bestow, At your feet my fond heart throw; But—



Valued gifts you'll not accept, "For," you say, "mammas'll object," Said the maid—the cunning elf—"Why not offer them—yourself?" LENA GILBERT FORD.

For a Christmas Dinner.

I shall always remember the bad luck our fife had at Fort Ripley, Minn., some years ago. He went on "sick report" the day before Christmas and as the doctor (an old time contract physician) had no patients in the hospital, the fife was admitted in order that the post chaplain could not use the ward for divine service on Christmas. The chaplain and the doctor were not the best of friends, and the latter doing all he could to provoke him by admitting the fife as a patient, he performed a maneuver which completely overpowered his enemy. Now that fife may have been sick, but if he was it in no way interfered with his appetite, and lying on his sick bed, with a mustard plaster on his manly chest, his thoughts were on the glorious dinner of the morrow. Christmas day arrived and with the first drum tap our fife arose, but he ate sparingly of breakfast

for fear of not being able to do justice to the mid-day meal. Noon came, the nurse called out "Chuck," our fife vanished into the mess hall with a Sioux war whoop. The tempting dinner before him well nigh paralyzed him with joy, especially as there were only three to eat it, beside himself, viz: hospital steward, nurse and cook. Just as the fife got his mouth in good working order for the turkey which the steward was about to carve, the doctor came into the room with a large roll of manuscript under his arm. Taking a chair within three feet of the table, the man of medicine unrolled the paper, put on his spectacles and after a couple of dry coughs remarked: "Steward, as this is Christmas day I thought I would come over and read a poem I wrote in 1869. It is entitled 'Lines on "Grant." After the reading I hope you will enjoy the excellent dinner before you.' The steward sank back in his chair with a sigh; the fife dropped two big tears on his empty plate. It was a few moments past 12 o'clock when the doctor began, it was 1:30 when he finished. By that time the fife had died in the stove, the dinner was cold and the small audience nearly frozen. Finishing, the audience was thanked for its attentiveness, when the disciple of Esculapius retired for his own quarters, where a warm and tempting meal awaited him. Next day the fife was returned to "duty," and although he still exists as a musical "windjammer" in the services of Uncle Sam, he is ready to shoot any one mentioning poetry to him.

COL. DIXON.

Yielding to Yuletide.

Many are the men who when they realize that Christmas is approaching look into their affairs and concede that this year the day must pass by without any special celebration. Not many, we fancy, reach this conclusion out of pure meanness, as did the miserable Scrooge whose tribulations Dickens has made known to us, but, as a rule, these decisions are arrived at upon very sound if very sad investigations into accrued profits and pressing liabilities. This little venture has miscarried for one head of a family, another one has depleted his savings in paying the doctor and the apothecary, and still another has learned something of the law's delay and the expensive costs thereof. He tells his wife and he tells his children that this year there will be no Christmas gifts. He says this over and over again, and he believes himself that there will be none. This has been his lean year, and those who belong to him must partake of his leanness. As the holiday approaches he sees in the streets and in the newspapers more evidences of greater preparation. As this activity increases, his avowals of inability to do a proper part in the customary celebration become stronger and more frequent. He doth protest so much that the children scarcely credit him, and secretly believe that Christmas will be celebrated as usual. And so it is; for the good man weakens at the last moment, and hurries around from shop to shop, and makes liberal purchases in time for the last delivery. And the children are not disappointed.

Johnny's Christmas.



"And what did you get in your stocking Christmas morning, Johnny?" asked the district visitor.

"Me fut," replied Johnny tersely and gloomily.

The Mistletoe of Pagan Origin.

The mistletoe is looked upon as the Christmas plant. A great many people believe that the distinction is owing to the fact that it blossoms in some countries at this time of the year. Such belief is founded on fiction. The mistletoe has been an emblem of Christianity almost since the time of Christ. It first came into use as such under the reign of Pope Gregory I, who sent some missionaries to Albion (now England) to spread Christianity among the Druids. Some years afterwards a pilgrimage Christianized Druids visited the Papal city bringing mistletoe branches and throwing them at the feet of Gregory as an evidence of their renunciation of Druidism. It will thus be seen that the mistletoe was first the emblem of Druid-paganism.

Said About Christmas.

A warm Christmas, a cold Easter. A light Christmas, a heavy sheaf. A green Christmas, a white Easter. A green Christmas makes a fat grave-yard.

A wind on Christmas day, trees will bring much fruit.

If Christmas finds a bridge, he'll break it; if he finds none he'll make one.

If ice will bear a man before Christmas, it will not bear a man afterward. The shepherd would rather see his wife enter the stable on Christmas day than the sun.

If the sun shines through the apple-tree on Christmas day, there will be an abundant crop the following year.

Christmas Stippers.

Devoted Wife—Have you any embroidered Christmas slippers?

Dealer—Plenty of them. You wish hand-worked, I presume?

"Yes, I want a pair that will look as though it took all summer to do them."

"Yes, Madam, we have that kind; they make a man almost weep when he thinks of the days and weeks and months of silent labor all for him."

"Well, here is my list. I measure. Charge him a few dollars extra for his next pair of boots."

Disappointed Hopes.

Mr. D. P. Works (Christmas eve).—Well, I got the sack, after all.

Mrs. Works—Oh, you dear! Did you get the seakins or the other?

Mr. Works—I got the other—the sack—the bounce—discharge! I've got no job, understand?